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Chinoiserie. Jouy, France, c1785 (detail)

PRINTED COTTON TEXTILES

The pictorial copperplate furnishing prints produced in England and France in the second half of the 18th century reflect the lightness and gaiety of social life of that period. A selection of these textiles from the museum collection will be on exhibition in Gallery A3 of the Agnes Allerton Wing until April 1.

The practice of printing fabrics from engraved copperplates was adopted as a method to produce large-scale pictorial and floral designs suitable for upholstery and drapery purposes. The pattern repeats are very large, often more than a yard square, and the best examples are naturalistic in

style. In printing, the pattern was incised on metal plates. These were placed on a carriage, which slid back and forth under the pressure of a roller. This process was limited to one color and created the mode for monochrome prints in red, blue, mauve or sepia.

The picturesque designs of these charming and delightful fabrics were executed with meticulous care and often are the work of the best artists and engravers of the day. While many designs were originals the great majority were copied or adapted from engravings of the 17th and 18th centuries; often scenes from various sources were combined

in one composition. There was an extraordinary quantity of engravings produced during this period which provided an inexhaustible source of design for the printers and engravers of cotton fabrics.

The fashion for printed cottons in Europe originated from the popularity of the painted and dyed cottons of India brought into European countries, directly or indirectly, by Portuguese traders. Because of their gay colors and exotic Oriental designs, they attracted wide attention and became popular for furnishings and wearing apparel.

In 1592, an English privateer captured the Portuguese vessel "Madre de Dios", with a cargo including Indian painted cottons, which were distributed throughout England. In 1631, the British East India Company was permitted by royal proclamation to import Indian painted cottons for the first time and from that time there are numerous references relating to them in British records.

An entry in the diary of Samuel Pepys for September 5, 1663, notes, "... and after many trials bought my wife a chint, that is a painted East India calico for to line her new study". Later, on November 21, 1663, he records: "At noon, I received a letter from Mr. Creed, with a token, viz., a very noble parti-coloured Indian gown for my wife", and on January 8, 1664, "... my wife, who this day put on her Indian blue gown which is very pretty".

In France the dyed and painted Indian cottons are said to have been introduced by the Portuguese traders between 1630 and 1640, and about 1658 they first appeared at the Fair of Saint Germain. With the establishment of the *Compagnie des Indes* by Colbert in 1664, increasing quantities of these fabrics were imported directly into France. These were known as *toile peinte, indiennes* or *chîtes, suratas, patnas, etc.*, according to the places from which they came. The extent of the trade was such that by 1683 Indian calicoes were made in special sizes for the European market.

These foreign products were very costly and this led to the attempt by the English and French to produce a cheaper material. As printing on paper had long been practised in Europe, it was a comparatively simple matter to apply the method to cloth, and thus the European printed cotton in-

dustry was created. During the 17th and 18th centuries, the court and nobility wore and furnished their houses with the genuine Indian fabrics, while the common people used the printed imitations.

The first successful factory in England for printing cotton fabrics was established by Cabannes, a French refugee, who founded a printworks at Richmond in 1690, but there are records showing that this work was carried on prior to this date. The British Museum has a 17th century trade card of a Calico Printer which reads, "Jacob Stampe living at ye signh of the Callico Printer in Houndsditch, Prints all sorts of Callicoes, Lineings, Silkes, Stuffs New or Ould at Reasonable Rates". In 1676 a William (or Will) Sherwin was granted a patent from the Crown, "A grant for fourteen years of the invention of a new and speedy way for producing broad cloth which being the only true way of East India printing and stayning such kind of goods". However, there is no record showing the locality in which Sherwin worked.

So great was the demand for printed and painted fabrics, both foreign and domestic, for furnishings and wearing apparel that practically everything for the purpose formerly made of wool or silk, was now supplied by the Indian trade or the newly established domestic manufacture.

This was considered so serious a threat to the weavers that in 1700 the importation of all Indian chintzes was prohibited, and in 1720 the act was extended to include cottons printed in England with the exception of those printed in one color. When the printers attempted to get around this order by using mixed goods such as cotton and linen, they were accused of infringement. Arguments were heated and violence broke out in many instances. However, in 1736, the Manchester Act (so-called from the leading part taken by Manchester in the struggle) upheld to a certain extent the side of the printers by permitting the printing of fabric providing that linen warp was used with cotton weft. Later, in 1774, when Arkwright's invention made it possible to produce an all-cotton cloth in England, the ban was lifted.

According to the notes of Jean Ryhiner, a Basle calico-printer, writing in 1766, the English printers of the early 18th century excelled in the elegance

of their designs and the beauty of the printing, and that the best English copperplate prints required four to six plates to produce the large-scale patterns.

The earliest documented use of engraved copperplates for printing cloth in the British Isles was by Francis Nixon and Theophilus Thompson at Drumcondra near Dublin in 1752. In 1757, Nixon moved to Merton, Surrey, England, and is presumed to have continued printing there until 1765.

The earliest surviving example of English copperplate printing is that of Robert Jones & Company of Old Ford, dated 1761, a panel of which the museum has been particularly fortunate in acquiring through the generosity of Mrs. Howell B. Erminger. Printed in red, the piece is signed, "R.I. & Co., Old Ford, 1761" and "R. Jones [Jones], 1761". As each scene is approximately forty inches square, very large plates must have been used to produce this handsome design of architectural ruins, figures and flowers.

The pattern has been taken from several sources. The pastoral scene is from an etching by Nicholas Berchem, 1652, and the peacock and poultry from an engraving by Josephus Bympson which was published in London in 1740 after a painting by Marmaduke Cradock (1660-1717). The ruined columns were a popular feature of decorative design about 1760 and show the influence of architects and furniture designers such as Sir William Chambers and Thomas Chippendale.

In spite of the obvious high standard of work produced by this factory, until 1955 there were only two known works—one dated 1761 and another 1769. That year in an Exhibition of English Chintz assembled by the Victoria and Albert Museum at the Cotton Board, Colour, Design and Style Centre in Manchester, England, two pattern books from Mulhouse showed seventeen hitherto unknown designs from Robert Jones of Old Ford. However little known are the works of this factory it undoubtedly produced some of the finest copperplate prints of the period, as attested by the surviving examples and the recently discovered designs.

Another English copperplate print of great interest is one showing a sporting design, the gift of Mrs. Charles B. Pike. It is executed in sepia and dates from about 1790. The pattern is taken from engravings after some of the paintings by Francis Hayman (1708-1776) which originally formed part of the decorations in Vauxhall Pleasure Gardens in London. These were produced many times during the 18th century, the first series appearing in 1743 when Thomas Bowles published twelve plates.

All six scenes of our textile are taken from these engravings. The three on the left show *See-Saw*, *Leap-frog* and *Sliding on the Ice*, and on the right are *Cricket*, *Battledore* and *Shuttlecock* and *Blind Man's Buff*. In this last, the artist has substituted the high steeple hat of the 1790's for the bonnet of about 1740 which appears in the engraving by N. Parr, published by John and Carrington Bowles.

In France as in England, the opposition to the production and importation of printed and painted cottons was widespread. The weavers declared themselves bankrupt by the fashion and when a shipload of printed cottons arrived in the winter of 1685, it ruined the market for woolen goods and caused a strike.

So strong were the protests, that Claude Lepeletier, comptroller-general of finance, issued an edict on October 26, 1686, prohibiting the importation of Indian fabrics and suppressing all workshops in France. It ordered the destruction of all blocks used in printing cottons, prohibited the sale after December 1, 1687 of all printed and painted cottons regardless of origin, and any such material found in the shops was to be burned and the merchants fined.

This edict had little effect on the sales and consumption of cotton fabrics. By the beginning of the 18th century, they were more common than ever. The *Compagnie des Indes* continued to unload huge cargoes to factories and clients. Cotton printing continued to be carried on in spite of orders and investigation proved futile.

Lepeletier's edict, following closely the revoca-

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Pastoral. English, 1761



Sporting Print. English, c1790

tion of the Edict of Nantes, led to the process being carried to other countries by workers and refugees, where they were encouraged to develop their trades. Therefore, instead of ending the demand for the fabrics, the French merely curtailed a growing domestic industry and furthered that of other countries, whose products in turn found a ready market in France through the extensive smuggling encouraged by the edicts. Royalty, nobility and the ministers who made the laws, all wore and furnished their apartments with the prohibited materials. Mme de Pompadour furnished the Chateau Bellevue with the finest *Indiennes* available. Finally the ministers recognized the futility of enforcing their orders and on November 9, 1759, all restrictions were officially removed.

The best known of the French factories established after the ban was lifted, was that of Christophe-Philippe Oberkampf. Oberkampf was the son of a dyer, served his apprenticeship in Swiss factories, and in 1754 became the colorist in the manufactory of Cottin and Cabannes in Paris, an establishment in the privileged quarter of the Arsenal of the Clos-Payen. Here Oberkampf introduced his process of fast dyeing, the "*bon teint*", and established his reputation for lasting colors which he maintained later in his own establishment.

Upon learning that the edict removing restrictions on cotton printing was about to be signed, he hastened to establish his own factory. For a site he chose Jouy on the River Bievre near Versailles, and built a small workshop. On May 1, 1760, the first piece, designed, engraved, printed and dyed by Oberkampf, was taken from the press. From 1763 to 1789, Jhe. Alexandre Sarrazin-Demaraise was Oberkampf's partner and devoted his time to the Paris end of the business, leaving Oberkampf in full charge of the works at Jouy.

The introduction of copperplate printing at Jouy made it necessary for Oberkampf to seek the services of someone able to carry on this meticulous and exacting work and for this he was fortunate in securing Jean Baptiste Huet (1745-1811).

Huet was one of the foremost engravers of the 18th century as well as one of the most talented and gifted decorative painters and it was due to him that the copperplate furnishing prints of Jouy

reached such world-wide renown. He was established as chief designer in the Oberkampf factory in 1783 and remained there in that capacity until his death in 1811.

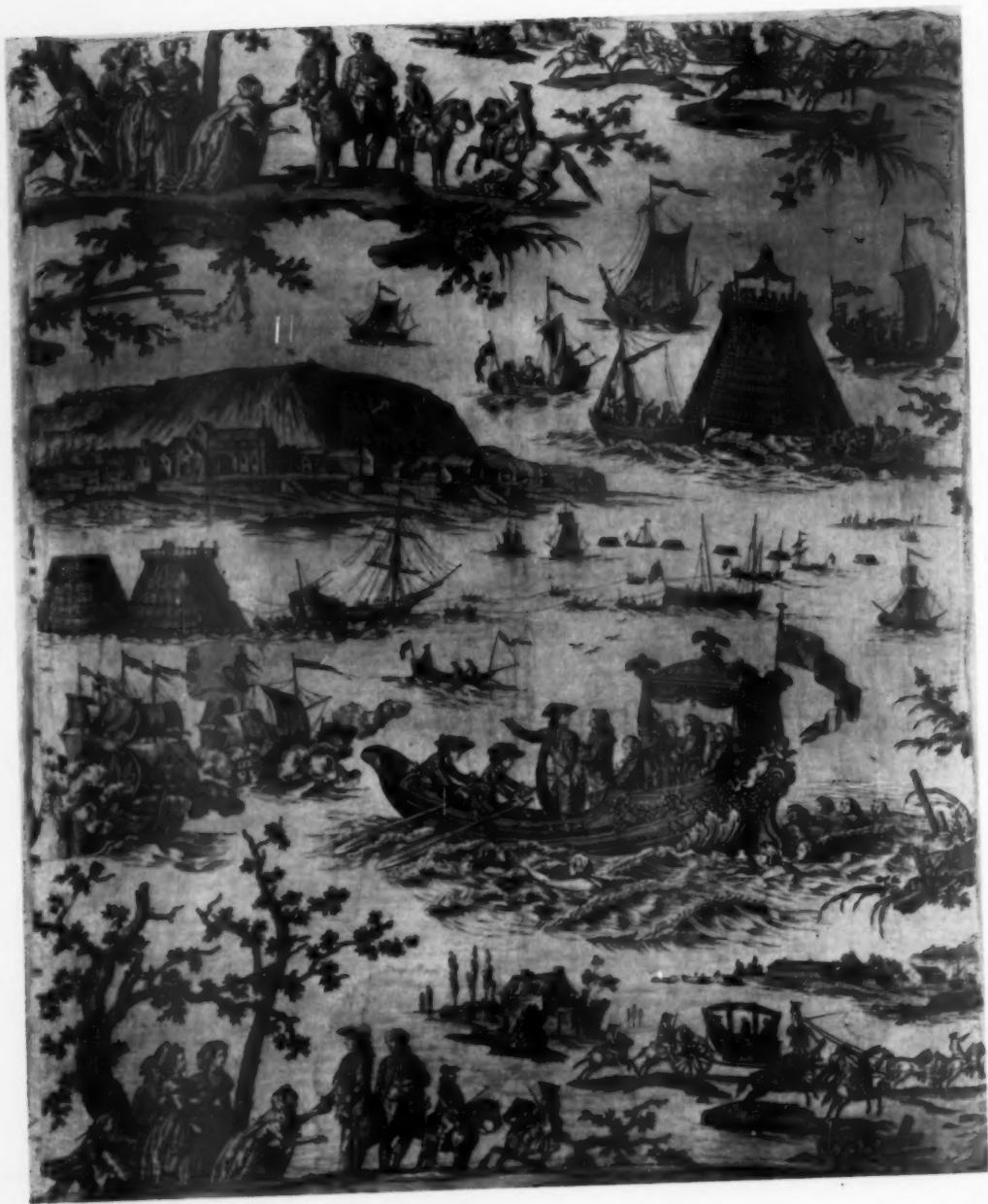
While Huet was greatly influenced by Boucher and Watteau and later by Prud'hon and David, his designs always remained individually his own creations. He adopted two styles of decoration. In his earlier designs, detached scenes are scattered over a plain ground and the intervening spaces filled with small motives, while in the later he framed his figures in foliated scrolls combined with arabesques.

Huet's first pattern designed for Jouy in 1783 was *Les Travaux de la Manufacture*, an example of which is included in our exhibition, the gift of Mrs. Potter Palmer. (Illus. on the cover)

In this design various phases of the industry are represented in picturesque groups. In the center is Huet seated at his drawing table with Levasseur standing by. Slightly above him to the right, Oberkampf is seen walking with his little son and on the extreme left Mlle. Jouanon, the flower painter, is at work at her drawing board.

Les Plaisirs des Quatre Saisons (detail)





Just below Huet, is the drying house with cloth hung like streamers along the walls, a custom of drying materials if the weather permitted. Ladies from nearby Versailles often chose their fabrics from the fluttering array of gay materials. In front of the drying house the cotton is being bleached on the meadow.

Other scenes include the block printer with his color boy; the threshing of the cotton on a raft; the dye vats; the preparation of colors; the cylinders for the madder bath; the mill for calendering; the lissoir for glazing; the retouchers at their table supervised by Bossert; and the milling in the Bièvre. In the upper right-hand corner is a scene of the village of Jouy.

In the center at the top is the copperplate press. Here, on the material coming from the press is the inscription *Manufacture Royale de S-D & Oberkampf* with the arms of the King. The use of this mark was one of the privileges granted to the factory in 1783 when the Crown conferred upon it the title of "Royal Factory".

Huet's *Les Delices des Quatre Saisons*, also the gift of Mrs. Potter Palmer, is another charming example of his work. This delightful print in red shows the activities of the four seasons represented with characteristic scenes. These scenes are taken from the *Pastorales* designed by Jacques Stella and engraved by Claudine Stella, published in Paris in 1667. Spring is represented by gay dancing figures; Summer, by scenes of cutting grain and picnicking; Autumn, by grape gathering and wine making; and Winter, by skating scenes and a horse-drawn sleigh.

Another design by the same artist, dating about 1786, the gift of Robert Allerton, is the *chinoiserie* panel printed in red. This charming fantasy is characteristic of Huet's style and was probably inspired by the works of Jean Pillement (1719-1808), a specialist in *chinoiserie* designs. The composition of the whimsical Oriental scenes including figures, animals, birds, tea houses and temples, makes it one of the most charming and delightful achievements of this talented artist.

The best and most artistic works of Jouy were produced during the period of Huet's employment and his original designs are preserved in the collection of the Musée de l'Union Centrale des Arts Décoratifs in Paris. The Revolution interrupted activities at Jouy and there were no products between 1793 and 1795. However, activities were resumed in 1796 and a new style was inaugurated which was to reach great heights of popularity in the 19th century.

Another French factory that achieved fame for copperplate printing was at Nantes, the firm of the Petitpierre brothers, who began operating about 1760, and until 1790 was known as *Petitpierre Frères et Cie.*

Nantes was an important center of commerce with America and Africa. It was granted the privilege of storing the products of England, Holland and Switzerland destined for trade and commerce with the colonies. In that way, it was possible to study and become familiar with the work of other countries. Therefore, it is hardly surprising that when the ban was finally lifted, Nantes became one of the most active centers of the cotton printing industry. Little is known of the workers employed at Nantes in spite of the large quantities of copperplates and wood block prints produced there, but the numerous surviving examples indicate the high degree of development of this factory.

One of the best known copperplate prints from this factory is called *Le Port de Cherbourg*. It was designed to commemorate the visit of Louis XVI to the port of Cherbourg in 1784 to inspect the fortifications for the harbor. The cones shown in the pattern are the caissons being towed into the harbor to be sunk for the foundation of the dike. On the largest one with the canopy, are the King and his party. The open boat is presumably the State barge for the use of the King and in the distance is seen the town of Cherbourg. This piece was made between 1785 and 1790 and is the gift of Robert Allerton.

MILDRED DAVISON

On facing page: Le Port de Cherbourg. Nantes, 1785-1790

THE ROAD TO CALVARY—ENGRAVING BY THE HOUSEBOOK MASTER

Among the most distinguished treasures of the Lessing Rosenwald Collection, which now is being given to the National Gallery of Art in Washington, there is a tiny engraving measuring no more than three by two and one-half inches, but revealing more vitality, earthy wit and superb draftsmanship than such a restricted area would seem to allow. It represents two peasants (or possibly traveling apprentices) engaged in a wrestling match, and it was made by the great anonymous artist of the late fifteenth century who is called either the Master of the Amsterdam Cabinet, after the print room which early in the nineteenth century had acquired the great majority of his engravings, or the Housebook Master, after a volume of drawings on vellum in the castle of Wolfegg in southern Germany. For many years, it has been the only print by the artist on this side of the Atlantic, and three times it has been accorded a prominent place in print exhibitions held at the Art Institute.¹

This summer, the Art Institute has had the good fortune to acquire for the Clarence Buckingham Collection one of the same master's most significant engravings, *The Road to Calvary*.² It is a challenging, perhaps even disturbing, print because of the entirely unconventional, extremely personal and emotional concept of the theme. The traditional dignity of the subject is forsaken in favor of drastic realism. Never before, to our knowledge, had Christ been shown thus crushed under the weight of the Cross, crawling on hands and knees, tormented and mocked by foppishly dressed, ape-like cretins. No panel painter of this period would have dared such an interpretation, which would have been unacceptable in a work commissioned for a church.

The unbroken diagonal of the Cross is a powerful unifying element in the composition. The harsh, rigid lines are an effective contrast to the richness and nervous restlessness of the elaborate garments, the overlapping hands and feet, and the multitude of lances sticking out behind the rocks. In the free and spacious arrangement of the figures, there is an element of improvisation which is never quite absent

in the artist's work, and which sets him so markedly apart from all the other engravers of the fifteenth century. This will become even more evident when we think of the artist's illustrious contemporary, Martin Schongauer, and his great engraving of the same subject. Though much richer in detail, Schongauer's composition is basically more primitive and relief-like in organization, besides being less emotionally involved.³

Equally unusual and personal is the technical aspect. There is little of the metallic precision and brilliance usually associated with the art of engraving. With its infinitely subtle, soft and warm tonalities, this print has much of the flavor of a silverpoint drawing, and that is the effect which the artist seems to have desired in most of his engraved work. It is believed that, to achieve this, he worked on a metal softer than copper, probably lead or pewter, and drew on it with a drypoint needle, practically with the ease of a silverpoint on paper. He was the first artist to make deliberate use of the burr, the roughness created on the surface of the plate through the scraping of the needle. (The burin, commonly used in engraving, actually removes the copper as it pushes along.) However, the borderlines between engraving and drypoint were not too clearly established until a generation later by Albrecht Dürer, the most methodical mind among the great printmakers. But Dürer, after making three superb drypoints in 1512, discarded that medium, obviously discouraged by the quick deterioration of the plate under the printing press.

Thus the extreme rarity of prints by the Housebook Master is not merely accidental, but the direct result of his mode of working.⁴ Probably he could not obtain more than about ten good impressions from one plate; if indeed he bothered to print that many. Had he been concerned, like Schongauer, Meckenem, or his minor contemporaries, with wide distribution of his work, he undoubtedly would also have signed his plates with a monogram. Those who copied his work did not fail to do so, and being more commercial, they used straight burin engraving. Perhaps



*The Housebook Master (The Master of the Amsterdam Cabinet), Dutch or German, active the last quarter of the 15th century. *The Road to Calvary*, engraving, 5 1/8 x 7 7/8 inches (129 x 193 mm). The Clarence Buckingham Collection. (Reproduced actual size)*



detail

printmaking was his favorite means of spontaneous improvisation; strangely enough, even few of the drawings in the Housebook can compete with the spontaneity of the prints. In his ninety-one prints, tragedy and humor are found side by side. The religious subjects make up a little more than one-half the total, again in contrast to Schongauer, who rarely did a secular subject. On the humorous side there are nude infants playing, a dog scratching himself, beggars, and grotesque escutcheon pieces such as a coat-of-arms with radishes or an acrobat standing on his head, which may well have been meant to ridicule the vogue for coats-of-arms among the common burghers of the time.

In spite of all the research done on the Housebook Master in well over a hundred years, his identity remains a mystery. It is not even certain whether he was Dutch or German. As long as only the prints were known, he was believed to be Dutch; but the discovery of the Housebook (about 1855), which obviously was done for a German family, as well as the subsequent discovery of his hand in a number of panel paintings in Freiburg, Mainz, Dresden, and Gotha persuaded the majority of scholars that he must have been German or, at least, have worked in Germany, namely in the region of the Middle Rhine, probably in Mainz. It should be added that these paintings, though they are of high quality, are much more staid and conservative than the prints and drawings.⁵

More recently, the possibility of his Dutch training and origin has again come to the fore. In 1936, the German scholar Count Solms-Laubach took up and defended a much older theory: namely, that the Housebook Master was none other than the painter Erhard Reuwich from Utrecht, who in 1483 accompanied Bernhard von Breydenbach, Dean of Mainz Cathedral, on a voyage to the Holy Land. The result of this voyage was one of the finest early illustrated books, and Reuwich is named in it both as illustrator and printer.⁶ It is the earliest known printed travelogue with illustrations designed on the spot and with large folding plates, of which the view of Venice is the most spectacular. The smaller woodcuts, particularly, showing groups of people, reveal the keenness and sparkle of observation which is characteristic of the engravings. However, serious analyti-



detail

detail



cal comparison is hampered by the fact that, according to the guild regulations of the time, the designer and cutter were different people. Still, the intriguing features of this identification remain, and it seems the best solution to the problem thus far advanced.

Whatever his name or origin, the artistic profile of the Housebook Master stands out clearly focused,

and the imprint of his work on the younger generation, notably on Albrecht Dürer, is unmistakable. Not only was he a pioneer who ventured into new fields of visual experience, but he was also a philosopher of profound humanity, capable of deep compassion as well as of earthy humor. In this, he was the true ancestor of Brueghel and Rembrandt.

HAROLD JOACHIM

FURTHER NOTES:

^{1a)} *Catalogue of A Century of Progress Exhibition of Prints*, Chicago, 1933. no. 24, pl. III.

^{b)} *The First Century of Printmaking, 1400-1500*, Chicago, 1941. no. 79

^{c)} *Prints 1400-1800*, The Minneapolis Institute of Arts, The Cleveland Museum of Art, The Art Institute of Chicago, 1956/57. no. 31, pl. 12

²The print is listed by Lehrs (*Geschichte und Kritischer Katalog* . . . vol. VIII, no. 13) as one of only three impressions existing today. The other two, in Amsterdam and Coburg, have minor flaws in regard to condition; the one acquired by the Art Institute is in immaculate condition. The Amsterdam impression was printed before ours, as the finer lines registered more distinctly. To offset the beginning wear of the plate, the artist seems to have made more deliberate use of surface tone in inking and wiping the plate.

³I should like to refer the reader to the sensitive comparison of the two artists on pp. 22-23 in Erwin

Panofsky, *Albrecht Dürer*, vol. 1, Princeton University Press, 1943.

⁴The account given by Lehrs in 1932 is still valid: there exist 124 impressions from 91 plates, 80 impressions being unique. Five is the largest number of impressions known from a single plate. Amsterdam owns 82 impressions, of which 59 are unique. Vienna owns 8, London (British Museum), Paris (Bibliothèque Nationale), and Coburg each have 6, and the rest are scattered, mainly among museums.

⁵The artist was also active in the field of book illumination, and it is quite probable that his training and earliest activity was in that field. However, practically no examples have survived outside of the four paintings of the Evangelists in a manuscript evangeliary which the Cleveland Museum of Art acquired in 1953.

⁶The Art Institute (Clarence Buckingham Collection) owns a well-preserved copy of the first Latin edition of 1486.

TWO AMERICANS PAINT A STILL LIFE

A century and a half ago still life painting in America was brought to a high degree of perfection by several members of the versatile and accomplished Peale family. During the succeeding years of the 19th century a great variety of artists turned their attention to the painting of carefully observed renderings of fruit, flowers or miscellaneous objects but with the change of styles and the advent of the Impressionistic manner, the majority of the earlier still life artists were almost completely forgotten. Before 1935 scarcely anyone remembered the name William Harnett, and John Frederick Peto remained in oblivion until an even later date. These two men, now held in such high regard, are of especial interest at the moment as the Art Institute has recently acquired an important still life by each of them. While they both painted in a realistic manner, they differed widely in their way of looking at things, for each had a very personal vision.

In 1935 a painting entitled *A Faithful Colt*, signed W.M. Harnett, 1890, was brought to the Downtown Gallery in New York. Although the name of the artist was quite unknown at the time, Mrs. Edith Halpert, the director of the gallery, bought the painting at once, for she sensed that this was a forthright and vigorous painting totally different from the usual run of American folk art which was then enjoying a great vogue. A realistically painted pistol hanging on a battered green door, two nails and some splintered nail holes scattered at random, and a newspaper clipping were rendered in the most meticulous *trompe l'oeil* manner. Such a commonplace subject might seem to be lacking in appeal, but the artist's rendering of textures and materials was handled with perfection while the objects so astutely placed showed a sense of organization and balance that was breathtaking.

Mrs. Halpert immediately set about finding more examples by this remarkable artist and in 1939 presented *Nature-Vivre*, the now memorable exhibition marking the re-discovery of William Harnett. Great interest was immediately aroused and museums and collectors vied with one another

to acquire one of the still lifes while the limited supply lasted. Other dealers went in search and soon the list of known Harnetts reached a hundred, but to the more careful observer two facts became apparent. Some of the group were ineptly painted and were obviously the work of imitators or less gifted artists bearing forged Harnett signatures. That was to be expected, but more puzzling was the fact that among the pictures of fine quality there were two distinct manners of painting, one a hard style with carefully differentiated textures, the other, softer with a suffused light which gave everything more or less the same texture.

Alfred Frankenstein, during the course of working on his book *After the Hunt*, dealing with Harnett and other 19th century still life painters, solved the problem of styles as a result of a chance visit which in detective story manner produced unexpected results. On the advice of a friend he stopped in Island Heights, New Jersey, to look up the daughter of an obscure painter named Peto, who he thought might be worthy of a brief footnote in his book on still life. To Mr. Frankenstein's amazement he found in Peto's studio a large assortment of candlesticks, lamps, pistols and other items which appeared in many of Harnett's paintings. He then went patiently through his extensive file of Harnett photographs, set aside all of those containing items in Peto's studio and found that all the pictures with Peto models were in the "soft" style. When these were compared with the numerous paintings still left in the studio, it became evident that they were all by the same hand. Subsequently it was proven that the majority of soft-style Harnetts had forged signatures, and in many cases revealed an unpainted Peto signature. These fabrications were by no means recent but dated in many cases from the later 19th century when Harnett was still popular. Peto, little known even in his own day, was unsuspectingly made a dupe when unscrupulous dealers bought up his work and transformed them into Harnetts to supply the continuing demands.

We now recognize Harnett and Peto as two dis-



tinctly individual personalities both very important in the field of still life painting but each with his very personal viewpoint. From the examples of their work in the Art Institute collection we have an excellent opportunity to examine their separate styles.

Irish by birth, William Michael Harnett was born in 1848 in Clonakilty in County Cork. His family moved to Philadelphia the following year and there the prospective artist grew up. At seventeen he learned the engravers trade, an experience which trained him in the observation of minute detail. Two years later he entered the night class of the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts. He could not afford to hire models, with the result that he turned to still life. In 1869 Harnett found employment with a jewelry firm in New York but was able to attend evening classes at the National Academy of Design as well as at Cooper Union. His first real encouragement came when a painting was sold for \$50 from a National Academy exhibition. Giving up engraving, he now concentrated on painting and was able to sell enough of his work to support himself. Returning to Philadelphia in 1876, he continued to prosper and at the end of three years had saved enough to go to Europe. After painting for a few months first in London, then in Frankfort, he settled in Munich where over a four-year period he worked intensively and made a good living selling pictures to travelers, several of whom were fellow Americans. Although his Munich professor had criticized his work severely, he decided to go to Paris and see what sort of a reception his paintings would receive. He worked diligently on a large painting, *After the Hunt*, which to his delight was accepted for the Salon of 1885 and favorably noted by the critics. Having established his reputation, he returned to New York where he enjoyed great popularity until his death in 1892.

In contrast to Harnett, John Frederick Peto lived his life in comparative obscurity, traveled little and received scant recognition. Born in Philadelphia in 1854, he perhaps began his painting career

decorating fire engines, since his father was in the business of selling fire-fighting equipment. He studied briefly at the Pennsylvania Academy in 1878, although he was already listed in the Philadelphia directory two years previous to this as a painter. Harnett was a friend of his during the seventies and undoubtedly exerted a strong influence on him in that he inspired Peto and evoked his admiration. From a point of view of style they were widely divergent. Peto's second profession, that of a cornet player, accounted for his moving in 1889 to Island Heights on the New Jersey shore where he played in bands at camp meetings. There he lived completely isolated from the urban world until his death in 1907. He never exhibited at the Academy after leaving Philadelphia and was completely forgotten as an artist except for a few Island Heights summer visitors who occasionally bought one of his paintings.

Peto and Harnett led widely different lives; it is no wonder then that their painting differed greatly despite the fact that they both dealt with commonplace subjects.

For *Sunday's Dinner* is a triumph of Harnett's skill in rendering textures and in creating an almost super-realistic illusion. A plucked rooster hangs by its right foot against a dark green door. Pin feathers fly about, giving this very dead fowl a curious and uncanny look of life and animation. Occupying the upper and lower right corners are symmetrical brass hinges with spots of verdigris; here and there, rivets are missing which have in some cases been replaced with screws, thus introducing subtle variations within the pattern. At the center left, forming a triangle with the hinges, is a brass escutcheon plate which has fallen to one side. One is tempted to reach forward to straighten the plate; and the desire to pluck off the floating feathers is almost irresistible. Were one to touch this repellent fowl, the flesh would surely give under the pressure of a finger. With Harnett, flesh is flesh, brass is unmistakably hard, uncompromising

William M. Harnett, American, 1848-1892. For Sunday's Dinner, oil, 37 1/2 x 21 1/2 inches. Dated 1888. The Wilson L. Mead Fund (page facing)



tinctly individual personalities both very important in the field of still life painting but each with his very personal viewpoint. From the examples of their work in the Art Institute collection we have an excellent opportunity to examine their separate styles.

Irish by birth, William Michael Harnett was born in 1848 in Clonakilty in County Cork. His family moved to Philadelphia the following year and there the prospective artist grew up. At seventeen he learned the engravers trade, an experience which trained him in the observation of minute detail. Two years later he entered the night class of the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts. He could not afford to hire models, with the result that he turned to still life. In 1869 Harnett found employment with a jewelry firm in New York but was able to attend evening classes at the National Academy of Design as well as at Cooper Union. His first real encouragement came when a painting was sold for \$50 from a National Academy exhibition. Giving up engraving, he now concentrated on painting and was able to sell enough of his work to support himself. Returning to Philadelphia in 1876, he continued to prosper and at the end of three years had saved enough to go to Europe. After painting for a few months first in London, then in Frankfort, he settled in Munich where over a four-year period he worked intensively and made a good living selling pictures to travelers, several of whom were fellow Americans. Although his Munich professor had criticized his work severely, he decided to go to Paris and see what sort of a reception his paintings would receive. He worked diligently on a large painting, *After the Hunt*, which to his delight was accepted for the Salon of 1885 and favorably noted by the critics. Having established his reputation, he returned to New York where he enjoyed great popularity until his death in 1892.

In contrast to Harnett, John Frederick Peto lived his life in comparative obscurity, traveled little and received scant recognition. Born in Philadelphia in 1854, he perhaps began his painting career

decorating fire engines, since his father was in the business of selling fire-fighting equipment. He studied briefly at the Pennsylvania Academy in 1878, although he was already listed in the Philadelphia directory two years previous to this as a painter. Harnett was a friend of his during the seventies and undoubtedly exerted a strong influence on him in that he inspired Peto and evoked his admiration. From a point of view of style they were widely divergent. Peto's second profession, that of a cornet player, accounted for his moving in 1889 to Island Heights on the New Jersey shore where he played in bands at camp meetings. There he lived completely isolated from the urban world until his death in 1907. He never exhibited at the Academy after leaving Philadelphia and was completely forgotten as an artist except for a few Island Heights summer visitors who occasionally bought one of his paintings.

Peto and Harnett led widely different lives; it is no wonder then that their painting differed greatly despite the fact that they both dealt with commonplace subjects.

For Sunday's Dinner is a triumph of Harnett's skill in rendering textures and in creating an almost super-realistic illusion. A plucked rooster hangs by its right foot against a dark green door. Pin feathers fly about, giving this very dead fowl a curious and uncanny look of life and animation. Occupying the upper and lower right corners are symmetrical brass hinges with spots of verdigris; here and there, rivets are missing which have in some cases been replaced with screws, thus introducing subtle variations within the pattern. At the center left, forming a triangle with the hinges, is a brass escutcheon plate which has fallen to one side. One is tempted to reach forward to straighten the plate; and the desire to pluck off the floating feathers is almost irresistible. Were one to touch this repellent fowl, the flesh would surely give under the pressure of a finger. With Harnett, flesh is flesh, brass is unmistakably hard, uncompromising

William M. Harnett, American, 1848-1892. For Sunday's Dinner, oil, 37 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 21 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches. Dated 1888. The Wilson L. Mead Fund (page facing)

metal, and the door with its splintered nail holes is the very essence of wood. Even the artist's signature and date are seemingly whittled into the door. So shallow is the apparent space of the picture that the rooster, well rounded as to form, seems to be hanging in front of the picture plane, a device which makes the realistic illusion all the more startling. Further intensity is achieved by the tautness of the design where each element is carefully placed to form a series of diagonal lines of tension to relieve the basic verticality of the composition. Turned upside down, the picture becomes a macabre travesty on a ballet dancer, terrifying in its impact. Although this aspect may not have entered the art-

ist's mind, it affords an added vision of the intensity of his conception.

Despite the fact that Peto regarded Harnett as his ideal, he did not attempt to follow his formality of compositional arrangement nor to differentiate textures of various materials. Peto favored "rack" pictures, that is, criss-crossed tape into which were stuck old letters, photographs and trade cards; he painted numerous assemblages of old books, pistols, discarded candlesticks and lanterns all arranged in a haphazard manner. These objects illuminated realistically with light from one direction were bathed in a uniform, powdery atmosphere which gave to metal, glass, wood or paper a Vermeer-like

John F. Peto, American, 1854-1907. Lights of Other Days, oil, 30½ x 45½ inches. 1906. The Goodman Fund



texture. In this way numerous objects, often quite unrelated, were brought together into a unified whole. In the Lights of Other Days a helter-skelter group of candlesticks, outmoded lamps and lanterns are placed on a shelf. (The actual shelf is in his studio over the door to the kitchen.) There is an air of pessimism or despair in these objects jostled together, many of them overturned, discarded as past their usefulness. Such candles as remain are largely burned down, gutted and untidy. Yet within this scene there is hidden a more cheerful note, for one senses that these objects have been much used, that people have depended on these lights and the feeling of their presence lingers in the background. An eerie quality, a sense of mystery pervades the painting. Peto is not concerned like Harnett with objects merely as objects in themselves, he is interested in the association value and what lies behind what we see. If Peto was preoccupied with used-up objects, it was no doubt a reflection of his own life, which was lived on the brink of poverty surrounded by aged and invalid relatives. They constantly interfered with him, and one senile old aunt, locked in her bedroom, rattled her door for hours at a time, which to the artist at work in his studio below was as unnerving as it was disturbing. No wonder he was frequently unable to finish a canvas and at times was so harassed that the calibre of his work suffered.

Peto was interested in poetry and from the lines of Thomas Moore:

*Oft in the still night,
Ere slumber's chain has bound me,
Fond memory brings the light
Of other days around me*

he selected the title for the Art Institute painting. Other days, trying though they may have been, seemed no doubt in retrospect preferable to the trials of his mature life. Though the lights on his shelf have gone out, there is an inner radiance which is more lasting in its implications.

In creating this atmospheric effect Peto was unwittingly dealing with a sort of Impressionism which softened contours, blurred the sense of depth, and constituted a complete break from the *trompe l'oeil* technique of Harnett and his lesser contemporaries. Ill-assorted as they may seem to

be, the individual objects are thus unified into a compact architectural arrangement. Illumination becomes a factor of greater importance than the objects themselves. Using browns and greens—a grayed blue-green in the lantern, which is almost a Peto trademark, he points up certain elements such as candlesticks with brassy yellows and areas of verdigris. By concentrating the strongest light near the center of the picture, he holds the composition in balance. One feels almost that this is a "night piece" artificially illuminated from an unseen source. Painted, according to the inscription on the back of the canvas, at Island Heights in 1906, this marks the culmination of the artist's career a year before his death.

Peto and Harnett, in dealing with homely subjects, were in the tradition of the earlier 19th century; Harnett remained in this tradition but it was Peto of the two who was the more modern, more forward looking because he delved into the realms of light effects and atmosphere. Harnett's "fool the eye" technique never ceases to astonish but Peto's mood, full of mysterious implications, is in the long run more compelling.

Although Harnett was popular in his day, his paintings did not appeal to sophisticated taste. His style would have been considered old-fashioned and his subject matter prosaic. Qualities which we admire in him today undoubtedly escaped those who bought his work and he himself was probably unaware of the fact that he possessed a rare ability to arrange his compositions in precarious balance. This hair-breadth equilibrium sets up tensions which add to the tenseness and vitality of Harnett's pictures. Had Peto been known by the leading artists of his day, he might have evoked some probation but his subject matter would have been considered lacking in elegance. Today we can appreciate the fact that he gives significance to humble objects, not through the arresting technique of super-realism, but by means of evoking a mood through an all-pervasive atmosphere of powdery light. While Harnett revealed the object, Peto interpreted what was before him and in so doing, was in advance of his time.

FREDERICK A. SWEET

THE ARTIST LOOKS AT PEOPLE

The theme of the large exhibition of paintings and sculpture, now on view in the East Wing Galleries, is expressed very simply and clearly by its title. It could as well have been called "Portraits from the 15th century to the Present, from the collections of the Art Institute," a phrase to conjure up rows of images, with every change in fashion telling the passage of time and generations; instead, the title chosen and the presentation of the exhibition are calculated to direct the spectator away from monotony.

In this exhibition, by avoiding the conventional restrictions of portraiture, it has been possible to include, under the broader term "people," works in which the artist has used his friends or his family to express more than human personality. It is no surprise, then, to see in the first room, hung with self-portraits and portraits of artists, Toulouse-Lautrec's *At the Moulin Rouge* and Renoir's *Rowers' Lunch*, both paintings we usually see as more than group portraits. By using this broad theme, it has been possible to make up the whole exhibit from the permanent collections, with one exception only—the *Portrait of Mrs. Leigh Block* by Ivan Albright, which Mr. and Mrs. Leigh Block have graciously allowed to be included in the gallery of Chicago women.

The paintings make their first appeal through the subject, and looked at from this point of view, some of the more celebrated works can still reveal surprises. The Courbet *Mère Gégoire*, for instance, that we have seen so often in the galleries devoted to the French school, and may have considered from other standards than portraiture, when compared with others in the same genre, dominates the room with its truthfulness of observation.

Curiosities are brought together, and masterpieces hang side by side with humbler efforts. The artists, whatever their powers, had the same intent: to project a human being, and

each figure on the wall has some story to tell. Consider the room where the Beata Beatrix of Dante Gabriel Rossetti communicates so many literary associations. Her long neck and heavy eyelids express so much romantic anguish. But a step away, there is Madame Cezanne in her yellow armchair; she reveals no secrets whatsoever, but exists forever, a configuration of volumes and planes of color, all balance and harmony. Here, in this company, appears also Mae West, seen by Dali as an object of complete artifice, yet to the life.

The exhibition is of great documentary interest, especially since the museum's collection of self-portraits and portraits of artists is so large. The labels beside each painting, however, indicate how many other professions are represented. Then, too, there are the intimate portraits artists have done of their families and friends. It is, to be sure, the women who come out victorious before posterity, transmitting their personalities—and fashions—with more *éclat* than men. There are exceptions: the elegant Manet by Fantin-Latour and the commanding presence of Max Beckmann's *Self-Portrait*, but what are these when faced with the appeal of Mrs. Potter Palmer, radiant in tulle and diamonds!

In the same room of Chicago women is the *Portrait of Mrs. Leigh Block*, painted by Ivan LeLorraine Albright in a dark tonality, but dark with the lighted darkness of her black pearl—a work of the most terrifying psychological penetration. Mrs. Emily Crane Chadbourne chose Foujita to paint her, with enormous chic, as a Recamier of the 20's, and Mrs. Robert Sanderson McCormick, who was Katherine van Etta Medill, appears in this room, her portrait done by Helleu, with her tiny waist and leg-of-mutton sleeves, extremely pretty and very Parisian.

The exhibition was arranged to stimulate the eye and imagination of the spectator. It presents as a theme the subject that has constantly engaged the artist and fascinated the beholder. **THE ARTIST LOOKS AT PEOPLE** will continue until January 11.

in their turn been inspired by the prints and paintings of France and Germany. It is also true that there is a recurring interest in Oriental art and its influence is again becoming evident since World War II. The exchange of artistic ideas can be fruitful. This has often been proven. If American artists such as Morris Graves, Mark Tobey, and Kenneth Callahan can find a challenge from contact

with the art of the Orient, and their work gives every evidence of this influence, why should not the artist of Japan be equally stimulated? The answer is that he can be and is, and perhaps in the future all the *sōsaku hanga* artists will apply the freedom of ideas from the West to the cultural heritage of their country. Then truly will these creative prints come of age.

MARGARET O. GENTLES

A selection of work by modern Japanese printmakers is on view at the entrance to the Administrative Offices, which is on the main floor, between the Oriental and Print and Drawing Galleries. Although the literature on contemporary Japanese prints is scant, the Ryerson Library does have the following well-illustrated readings for your reference:

Fujikake, Shizuya. *Japanese Woodblock Prints*. Rev. ed. Tourist Library, vol. 10. Japan Travel Bureau, Tokyo, 1953

Michener, James A. *The Floating World*. Random House, New York, 1954

Olson, Eleanor. *Japanese Contemporary Prints*. The Museum (published by The Newark Museum), vol. 8, no. 4 n.s.: 1-16, Fall, 1956

Statler, Oliver. *Modern Japanese Creative Prints*. *Monumenta Nipponica*, vol. XI, no. 2: 1-59, July, 1955

Statler, Oliver. *Modern Japanese Prints*. Charles E. Tuttle Company, Rutland, Vermont, and Tokyo. 1956

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